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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABU DHABI 004188

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SUBJECT: UAE: Biographies of New Cabinet Members

REF: A) Abu Dhabi 3955 B) Abu Dhabi 2254

(U) Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) The November 2 cabinet reshuffle merged six ministries into three, created a new ministry, shifted portfolios and elevated seven new people to ministerial rank. As part of our analysis of the new cabinet, we have prepared biographies of its members. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed swore in his new cabinet on November 21, 2004.

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¶2. (C) Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of Economy and Planning  
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--Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi is the first female Minister appointed to the UAE Cabinet. An excellent contact of the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General, Sheikha Lubna is a warm, dynamic and highly intelligent leader who has cultivated close ties with many U.S. officials and business leaders.

--Career and Education: Sheikha Lubna was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Tejari.com, an online business to business marketplace to buy and sell goods and services created and established by the Emirate of Dubai, in April 2000. Under her management, the company experienced quick growth. Prior to that she had been a manager in the Dubai Port Authority, working under DPA CEO Sultan bin Sulayim, with whom she maintains close ties. She also acted as Dubai branch manager for the General Information Authority,

the organization responsible for automating the UAE federal government.

--Sheikha Lubna holds a Bachelor of Science degree from California's Chico State University and an Executive MBA from the American University of Sharjah. She studied in the UK and Japan prior to going to the US. She frequently represents the UAE at international conferences, including last year's Arab American Forum in Detroit where she led a delegation of UAE businesswomen and the first TIFA council talks with the USG last April. She serves on the board of the Thunderbird School of International Management.

--Significance: Sheikha Lubna is a true believer in open economies and free trade. While other UAE interlocutors have expressed concern about the dislocating effects that an FTA might have on Dubai families who rely on mandatory "agency" relationships with U.S. firms, Lubna has no patience for that: "These people just want to sit around and do nothing and get paid for it. They're just going to have to get used to the idea that from now on they're going to have to work for a living, just like I do." Embassy contacts at the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy have both expressed support for her appointment, saying that "she will shake up the place" by reforming a generally backward leaning bureaucracy and pushing forward economic reform.

--Personal Data: Despite having achieved prominence in Dubai, as a high-profile prot of MBR, Sheikha Lubna is actually a member of Sharjah Emirate's ruling family, and (as an unmarried woman) she continues to reside there with her mother and sisters. Sheikh Sultan, the religiously conservative current ruler of Sharjah and Sheikha Lubna's maternal uncle, is said to be somewhat uncomfortable with Lubna's very public and (until now) Dubai-centric role in the UAE and international public arena. While in the UAE, she wears a traditional "abaya" (black cloak) and "shayla" (hair covering), but in private and when speaking abroad she frequently removes both, sporting stylish western business dress.

--Ministry: The Ministry of Economy and Commerce and the Ministry of Planning merged into the Ministry of Economy and Planning. The original Ministry of Economy and Commerce was responsible for regulating UAE businesses under the companies' law as well as regulating trade agreements with other countries and the WTO. Many parts of the ministry had the reputation of being overly bureaucratic and not aggressively pro-reform. For that reason, the UAE gave the lead in TIFA (and FTA) negotiations with the US to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Planning had the task of collecting and consolidating statistics for the UAE; these statistics have been sharply criticized in the past, in part due to the difficulty of collating information from seven semi-autonomous emirates.

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13. (C) Major Gen Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan,  
Minister of Interior  
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--Career and Education: Sheikh Saif is a former Under Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior and he is

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Director General of the Abu Dhabi Police where he holds the rank of Major General. He implemented the retina-scanning program at UAE ports of entry to prevent deportees from returning to the UAE. He implemented the Institute for Special Needs in 2002 at the Ministry of the Interior, an employment program for special needs adults in the UAE.

--Sheikh Saif holds a bachelor's degree in political science from UAE University. He studied English in the UK where he also attended a training program for police at Scotland Yard.

--Significance: Sheikh Saif is a good friend of the U.S. and pays close attention to Embassy security. He reportedly is autocratic, delegating little authority to his subordinates. He is commonly regarded on the street, however, as the right person for the Interior job.

--Personal Data: Born in 1968, Sheikh Saif is a son of the late UAE President Sheikh Zayed and Muza Suhail Awaida Shamsi. He is married to Asma bint Awaida bin Suhail Al-Khaili.

--Ministry: The Ministry of Interior is responsible for overseeing the federal police, prisons, and support centers. Additionally, it oversees immigration, and civil defense.

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14. (C) Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Public Works  
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--Career and Education: Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan is currently the chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Civil Aviation, deputy chairman of Gulf Air, and a member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council. He is also the deputy chairman of Emirates Media Inc. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak received his bachelor's degree in political science and public administration from the UAE University in 1982. He speaks good English.

-- Significance: After the Bush re-election, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak has indicated that he was pleased with the US role in the region, particularly since he felt it important the US stay longer in Iraq to stop the insurgency.

--Personal Data: Born 1959, he is the son of former Minister of Interior Mubarak bin Mohammed Al Nahyan who is the oldest male member of the Al Nahyan ruling family, although he was incapacitated by a car accident in 1979. He is a distant cousin of current UAE president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and his brother Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan is the current Minister of Education.

--He is married to Sheikha Moza (daughter of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammed Al Nahyan) and they have two sons. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak is passionate about soccer, and is the head of the Al Ain Soccer Club.

Ministry: The Ministry of Public Works is responsible for federal-level transportation, technical services, government housing projects, and maintenance. The Ministry is one of the ways that Abu Dhabi distributes wealth to the poorer emirates.

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15. (C) Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Presidential Affairs  
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--Career and Education: Sheikh Mansour established the President's Office and was director general of the office until it was elevated to the ministerial level. He serves as chairman of the International Petroleum Investment Corporation and deputy chairman of the Sheikh Zayed Charitable Foundation. He is a member of the Supreme Petroleum Committee.

--Sheikh Mansour was an English student at Santa

Barbara Community College in 1989. He speaks English well, but his academic record was poor. He received a bachelor's degree in international affairs in 1993 from the UAE.

--Significance: Sheikh Mansour was a powerful behind-the-scenes player in controlling access to Sheikh Zayed through the President's Office. It is unclear whether this role will continue under Sheikh Khalifa. Press clippings have announced that Sheikh Mansour, as Minister for Presidential Affairs, will be Sheikh Khalifa's chief adviser in all issues.

--Personal Data: Born in 1970, Sheikh Mansour is one of the six sons known as the Bani Fatima (sons of the late Sheikh Zayed by his favorite wife Fatima). He is married to Alia bint Mohammed bin Buti.

--Ministry: The Ministry for Presidential Affairs was established on Nov. 2, 2004 with the purpose of offering advice to the President in all matters. The new ministry encompasses all previous officials from the President's Office and the Presidential Court, and will likely hold a similar role in the Cabinet.

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16. (C) Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Communications  
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--Career and Education: He is chairman of the Dubai Islamic Insurance and Reinsurance CO. (AMAN) and a Vice-Chairman of Dubai Islamic Bank. Since 1998, he has been a managing partner of Al Nabooda Group, the family business of the Dubai-based merchant family, Al Nabooda, which is involved in contracting, travel, car dealerships, and other ventures. He is a member of the Dubai Economic Affairs Council, an advisory body of prominent businessmen and government officials which makes recommendations about economic and business policies to the Dubai government. He previously served as deputy chairman of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry from 1994 to 1996 and helped set up Dubai Cargo village at the Dubai Airport. Al Mansouri is a University of Michigan graduate, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Embassy Contacts at the Ministry of Finance praised Al Mansouri's strong private sector background.

--Significance: Al Mansouri appears to be an ally of Minister of State for Financial and Industrial Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Khalfan bin Kharbash.

--Personal Data: Al Mansouri is married to a daughter of the Al Nabooda family.

--Ministry: The Ministry of Communications is responsible for the postal service, civil aviation, meteorology, and maritime, land, and air transportation. With the UAEG's announcement that it will open up the telecommunications sector to competition and the transfer of the UAEG's share of telecommunications company Etisalat from the Ministry of Communications to the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communications' role in telecom is less clear. The Minister of Communications is no longer on Etisalat's board. The Ministry of Communications does represent the UAE in discussions with Intelsat and other international fora, but once the regulatory authority is set up, the responsibility for international relations may shift to it. While each individual emirate has its own Department of Civil Aviation, the federal Civil Aviation Authority manages the overall air traffic system for the UAE.

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17. (C) Mohammed bin Dha'en Al Hamili, Minister of Energy  
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--Career and Education: Until his appointment as Minister of Energy, Al Hamili worked in successive marketing and refining positions in the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. In 1997 and 1998 he was the general manager of ADNOC. He represented the UAE as a governor in OPEC from 1994 to 2002. He is currently the head of the administrative council for the National Company for Gas Transportation and the National Transportation Company. He has also previously served as chairman of the board of directors for National Gas Shipping CO. and the Abu Dhabi National Tanker Co. He is a member of the Supreme Institution for Specialized Economic Region in Abu Dhabi. Al-Hamili is a 1998 Harvard Business School graduate. He is also a certified accountant.

--Significance: Al Hamili is taking over the new Ministry of Energy, a merger of the former Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources. He has announced that he expects the UAE will maintain its present oil policy, with no expected changes.

--Personal Data: Al-Hamili was born Dec. 31, 1952 and is from the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

--Ministry: The Ministry of Energy is a merger of the Ministry of Water and Electricity and the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources. The Ministry of Petroleum represents the UAE at OPEC meetings and agrees to OPEC quota constraints. However, oil and natural gas are owned by the individual emirates, which means that Abu Dhabi's Supreme Petroleum Council plays a much bigger role in setting overall oil sector policy. (Reftel B). The former Ministry of Electricity and Water provided federal regulation, funded projects in the poor northern emirates (through the Federal Electricity and Water Authority (FEWA)) and is engaged in a project to connect the electricity grids throughout the Emirates. FEWA is responsible for projects in Fujairah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, and Umm al Quwain, while Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai have their own Electricity and Water Authorities.

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18. (C) Dr. Ali bin Abdullah Al Ka'abi, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs  
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--Career and Education: New Minister Dr. Ali bin Abdullah Al Ka'abi served as a Manager at the UAE Offsets Group. He holds a Ph.D. in Engineering Management and Software and Information Systems Management from George Washington University. He is also a graduate of Sandhurst University Military College. He has previously worked as an IT advisor with the UAE Armed Forces, an IT Manager in the Washington office of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), and an IT Manager in the Office of the Defense Attache of Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington DC.

--Significance: After his appointment, Dr. Al Ka'abi stressed that his priority would be to address the UAE's demographic challenges and organize the labor force so that "current nagging problems are resolved." His key challenge will be to pass and implement new labor laws, particularly important for the US in the upcoming FTA negotiations. He has announced the formation of a committee within the Ministry to help manage the labor market, by addressing issues of transparency and clientele service.

--Personal Data: Dr. Al Ka'abi was born in 1968.

--Ministry: The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

is responsible for employment visas, labor market regulation, and private sector labor issues. Additionally, the Social Affairs section oversees social security, NGO's, public beneficiaries associations, and disabled assistance programs. The Ministry is taking the lead on drafting a new labor law that meets ILO standards, in addition to presiding over labor disputes.

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